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Illegal trade in wildlife: the environmental, social and economic consequences for sustainable development

Information note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. Ecosystems play a crucial role, especially for developing economies, by supporting revenues, future development opportunities, livelihoods and sustainable harvests in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Ecosystems support tourism, valued at 5 to 10 per cent of national economies, and supply other vital services, such as buffering the effects of extreme weather events, including floods, droughts and cyclones, and ensuring the provision of clean water to cities. Healthy ecosystems provide the platform upon which future food production and economies are ultimately based.

2. However, the opportunities that ecosystems provide for future development are threatened by serious and increasingly sophisticated transnational organized environmental crime, undermining development goals and good governance. Transnational organized environmental crime includes illegal logging, poaching and trafficking in a wide range of animals (including illegal fishing), illegal mining and dumping of toxic waste. It is a rapidly increasing threat to the environment, revenues from natural resources, state security and sustainable development. Estimates from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) place the monetary value of transnational organized environmental crime (including illegal logging, fisheries and other wildlife trade, mining and dumping of toxic waste) at between $70 billion and $213 billion annually.[1] This compares to a global official development assistance figure of approximately $127 billion. While benefiting a relatively small criminal fraternity, the illegal trade in wildlife is depriving developing economies of billions of dollars in lost revenue and development opportunities.

3. The illegal trade in wildlife – including terrestrial and aquatic animals, plants and fungi, and their products – is no longer an emerging issue. The scale and nature of the challenge have been recognized in decisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Economic

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

[1] Estimate based on analysis of reports and datasets held by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

and Social Council, the Security Council, the General Assembly, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and others, including at the national level. The issue has also been addressed at high-level political conferences, most notably those recently convened in Gaborone and Paris (December 2013), London (February 2014) and Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania (May 2014). However, the response in terms of impact on the ground is still lagging behind in terms of the scale and development of the threat to wildlife, including forests, and, increasingly, the targets of various development goals.

4. The illegal trade in wildlife is particularly challenging as it involves multiple dimensions, including poverty and governance, and is often hidden within the legal trade. It also commonly involves the mixing of legal and illegal harvesting of resources. Such harvesting is carried out using advanced, deliberate and carefully executed systems of laundering of illegally procured wood, charcoal, bushmeat, fish and other wildlife products. The illegal trade in wildlife can involve complex combinations of illegal practices, including trafficking, forgery, bribery, violence, the use of shell companies, and even the hacking of Government websites to obtain or forge permits. The laundering of illegally sourced wood, fish and other wildlife products in the supply chain is a common practice.

5. Owing to the complexity of the illegal wildlife trade, a diverse response is required in both the short-term and the long-term, and from the local to the international levels. In order to curb the increase in the illegal wildlife trade, responses must involve a range of legal measures, including regulation, legislation and enforcement, environmental management, consumer and demand reduction strategies, and the promotion of alternative livelihood opportunities for those involved. Fully understanding the phenomenon of illegal wildlife trade requires broad insight into the relationship between the environmental resources at stake, their legal and illegal exploitation, loopholes in legislation, the scale and types of crimes committed, and the dynamics of the demand driving the trade. The finance resulting from this illegal trade, known as "threat finance", fuels conflicts and terrorism, and illegal wildlife supply chains are often integral to the generation of such finance.

II. Scale of the crisis

6. The illegal trade in fauna has been estimated by different sources to be worth from $7 billion to $23 billion dollars annually,[2] involving a wide range of species including insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish and mammals. It concerns both live and dead specimens or products thereof, used for pharmaceutical, food, ornamental or traditional medicinal purposes. The illegal harvest and trade at the national and international levels affects a range of taxa such as great apes, elephants, tigers, rhinoceros, Tibetan antelopes, bears, corals, birds, pangolins, reptiles, sturgeon for black caviar, and a wide range of other commercial fisheries species from the high seas and territorial waters. All of these have a significant value on the black market, but an even greater value for national economies if managed sustainably. The illegal trade in wildlife operates by definition outside official government regulation and management, and thus represents a significant economic, environmental and security threat that has received relatively little attention to date.

7. The scale of revenue from the illegal trade in fauna is dwarfed by the income from the illegal trade in flora. The illegal exploitation of and trade in flora, including illegal logging, has been estimated to represent a value of between $30 billion and $100 billion annually or 10–30 per cent of the total value of the global timber trade.[3] An estimated 35–90 per cent of the wood sourced from some tropical countries is suspected to come from illegal sources or has been logged illegally. In addition to the illegal trade in harvested wild plants for ornamental and medicinal purposes, the illegal trade in flora appears to take four main forms: (a) illegal exploitation of high-value endangered wood species, including rosewood and mahogany (many of which are now listed under CITES); (b) illegal logging of timber for sawn wood, building material and furniture; (c) illegal logging and laundering of wood through plantation and agricultural front companies to supply pulp for the paper industry; and (d) illegal logging within and outside protected areas concealed within the largely unregulated woodfuel and charcoal trade, extensive tax evasion and fraud, and supply of fuel through the informal sector.

[2] OECD, "Illegal trade in environmentally sensitive goods", Executive summary, available from www.oecd.org/tad/envtrade/ExecutiveSummaryIllegalTradeEnvSensitiveGoods.pdf; UNODC, 2011, "Transnational organized crime in the fishing industry", available from www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Issue_Paper_-_TOC_in_the_Fishing_Industry.pdf; UNEP-INTERPOL, 2012, "Green carbon, black trade: illegal logging, tax fraud and laundering in the world's tropical forests", available from www.unep.org/pdf/RRAlogging_english_scr.pdf.

[3] UNEP-INTERPOL, 2012, "Green carbon, black trade: illegal logging, tax fraud and laundering in the world's tropical forests", available from www.unep.org/pdf/RRAlogging_english_scr.pdf.

8. The trafficking and smuggling of endangered CITES-listed wood species such as rosewood and some species of mahogany involve organized crime in both harvesting and in distribution through large trans-oceanic shipments. Most illegally sourced and traded wood is either not considered or not recognized as contraband by customs officials, or is falsely declared as legally sourced and traded wood, or mixed inside paper and pulp. Over 30 different ways of conducting illegal logging and laundering of timber have been identified, including through the use of false documentation, certification, logging permits and bribes, and even the hacking of government websites to obtain transport permits.

9. For pulp and paper production, holding companies in tax havens, shell companies and plantations are actively used to bypass logging moratoriums under the pretext of agricultural or palm-oil investments or alleged plantation development. Such plantations or agricultural developments are never established, or they are declared bankrupt once they have been cleared, resulting in significant loss of revenue to Governments. The perpetrators of such activities make use of legal loopholes for tax avoidance, or simply directly commit illegal tax evasion. Plantations are also used as cover for larger networks of forest logging roads. The road networks are used to funnel illegal timber through plantations, or to ship wood and pulp via legal plantations in order to reclassify pulp or wood as derived from legal production.

10. These methods effectively bypass many current customs efforts related to the Lacey Act and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme (FLEGT Programme) which restrict the import of illegal tropical wood to the United States of America and the European Union, respectively. According to data from the statistical office of the European Union, Eurostat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the European Union and the United States import approximately 33.5 million tons of tropical wood in all its forms. It is estimated that 62–86 per cent of all suspected illegal tropical wood entering the European Union and the United States arrives in the form of paper, pulp or wood chips, not as roundwood, sawnwood or furniture products,[4] which have received the most attention in the past. These processed products are often mixed with legal products to hide their origin, providing substantial profits and benefits in terms of competition and depressing the prices and incomes of sustainable industries. Such practices represent a particular challenge to certification schemes and consumer awareness.

III. The particular challenge of the illegal trade in woodfuel and charcoal

11. Official estimates by FAO suggest that just under half of tropical wood consumption in Asia (range 36–98 per cent) and in Latin America (range 8–85 per cent) is used for woodfuel.[5] The remaining half in both regions is divided into sawnwood and pulp for the paper industry and other products. Charcoal and pulp in particular are subject to exploitation by criminals.

12. In Africa, nearly 90 per cent of wood consumed is estimated to be used for woodfuel and charcoal (range 35–95 per cent), with an official charcoal production of 30.6 million tons in 2012, worth between approximately $9.2 billion and $24.5 billion annually.[6] The unregulated charcoal trade alone is estimated to involve a direct loss of revenue for African countries of between $1.5 billion and $3.9 billion annually.[7] In the light of the current trend in urbanization and the projected population increase of another 1.1 billion people in sub-Saharan Africa by 2050, the demand for charcoal is expected to at least triple in the short term. This is expected to lead to severe impacts such as large-scale deforestation, pollution and consequent health problems in slum areas, especially for women. Increased charcoal demand will also rapidly accelerate emissions from both forest loss and short-lived climate pollutants in the form of black carbon. The production of and trade in charcoal represents an important source of income for poor rural producers and an inexpensive energy source for the urban poor resulting in very high demand. Charcoal as a product has a legal status that varies

[4] See http://faostat3.fao.org/faostat-gateway/go/to/home/E; www.itto.int/annual_review_output/?mode=search&id=9; http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home.

[5] Ibid.

[6] http://faostat.fao.org/site/626/default.aspx#ancor; http://faostat.fao.org/site/628/default.aspx.

[7] Figures from FAOSTAT and the World Bank, *Environmental Crisis or Sustainable Development Opportunity: Transforming the charcoal sector in Tanzania*, available from www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2009/09/01/000334955_20090901084035/Rendered/PDF/502070WP0Polic1BOx0342042B01PUBLIC1.pdf.

widely between jurisdictions in and between countries. The charcoal trade ranges from regulated to unregulated, illicit and even illegal, and in some instances charcoal is a currency that fuels conflict.[8]

13. While the official exports from most African countries amount to just a few truckloads annually, the available evidence suggests that far greater numbers of trucks are used to gather bags of charcoal around protected areas at night, including across border points. The analysis of satellite imagery reveals massive illegal logging in many protected areas, including in conflict zones of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or in north-eastern Madagascar, where vessels are loaded with and export charcoal or timber, including rosewood. Internet listings reveal over 1,900 charcoal dealers in Africa alone, at least 300 of whom officially export minimum orders of 10–20 tons of charcoal per shipment. The actual figures are likely to be many times higher, and minimum daily orders for many individual exporters exceed official total annual exports. For East, Central and West Africa, the net profits from the illegal dealing in and taxing of unregulated, illicit or illegal charcoal is estimated at up to $7.4 billion, which is 2.8 times greater than the street value of illegal drugs traded in the region.[9]

IV. Role of the illegal trade in wildlife in threat finance

14. The illegal trade in wildlife plays a significant role in threat finance, providing funding for organized crime and non-State armed groups including terrorist groups. In some instances, the exploitation of resources is a causal factor driving conflicts, while in others it is an opportunistic by-product of conflict. Whichever the case, it has a serious impact on the natural resources involved, including being the cause of the extinction of a number of local species. As highlighted above, the most important element of the illegal trade in flora and fauna in terms of threat finance is probably charcoal, although other products are also significant.

15. An estimated 15,000 elephants were killed at 42 sites covered by the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) system in 2012. The size of the forest elephant population is estimated to have declined by around 62 per cent between 2002 and 2011.[10] The number of elephants killed in Africa is in the range of 20,000–25,000 per year out of a total population of 420,000–650,000.[11] Poached African ivory in its raw state may represent an end-user street value in Asia of an estimated $150 million to $188 million per year. This is in addition to ivory from Asian sources. The available evidence, including from the volume of the trade, the large individual shipments and the high value of ivory, point to the involvement of transnational organized criminal networks. Ivory also provides a portion of the income raised by militia groups in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is probably a primary source of income for the Lord's Resistance Army currently operating in the border triangle of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Similarly, ivory provides a source of income for the Sudanese Janjaweed and other horseback gangs operating between Chad, the Niger and the Sudan. Given the local abundance of elephants and the estimated number of elephants killed within striking range of these militia groups, the likely annual income from ivory for such groups in the whole of eastern, western and central sub-Saharan Africa is probably in the order of $4 million–$12.2 million.

16. With regard to rhinoceros, some 94 per cent of the poaching takes place in South Africa and Zimbabwe, which have by far the largest remaining populations of rhinoceros. The poaching of rhinos has increased dramatically, from possibly less than 50 poached in 2007 to over 1,000 in 2013, involving organized syndicates. The population sizes of black and white rhinoceros was around 4,800 and 20,100, respectively, in 2010, with Asian one-horned rhinoceros numbering around 3,600 individuals. Rhinoceros have disappeared entirely from several Asian and African countries in recent years, although overall numbers of rhinoceros in Africa have been increasing. Rhinoceros horn

[8] UNODC, 2013, Transnational Organized Crime in Eastern Africa: A Threat Assessment, available from www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/TOC_East_Africa_2013.pdf.f and UNEP-INTERPOL, 2010, *The Last Stand of the Gorilla: Environmental Crime and Conflict in the Congo Basin*, available from www.unep.org/pdf/GorillaStand_screen.pdf; Security Council, 2002, "Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo", available from www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/96/96819_congo_20021031.pdf.

[9] UNODC, 2013, *Transnational Organized Crime in Eastern Africa: A Threat Assessment*, available from www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/TOC_East_Africa_2013.pdf.

[10] Maisels et al., 2013, "Devastating decline of forest elephants in Central Africa", available from www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0059469.

[11] CITES, 2013, "Status of African elephant populations and levels of illegal killing and the illegal trade in ivory: A report to the African Elephant Summit", December 2013, available from https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/african_elephant_summit_background_document_2013_en.pdf; UNEP, CITES, IUCN, TRAFFIC 2013. *Elephants in the Dust – The African Elephant Crisis*. A Rapid Response Assessment. UNEP, GRID-Arendal.

poached in 2013 has a street value of around $63.8 million to $192 million, but much less for those at the frontline of poaching.

17. The illicit taxing of charcoal – commonly amounting to up to 30 per cent of the value of the goods being traded – is conducted on a regular basis by organized criminals, militias and terrorist groups across Africa. For example, Al Shabaab's primary income appears to be from informal taxation at roadblock checkpoints and ports,[12] and they have been known to make up to between $8 million and $18 million per year from charcoal traffic at a single roadblock in Somalia's Badade District. The export of charcoal from Kismayo and Baraawe ports in particular has increased since the institution of a Security Council charcoal export ban. Al Shabaab retains about one third of the income from that export, which represents between $38 million and $56 million. The overall size of the illicit charcoal export trade from Somalia has been estimated at between $360 million and $384 million per year.[13] Although further investigation is needed into n the role of charcoal in threat finance, for African countries in conflict, including the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Somalia and the Sudan, a conservative estimate suggests that the militia and terrorist groups in the regions may earn, depending on prices, from $111 million to $289 million annually from their involvement in taxing and their control of the illegal or unregulated charcoal trade.

18. The charcoal trade may double or triple in size in the coming decades with rising demand. By having networks and shell companies involved in the trade, militias or terrorist groups can ensure an income independent of the success of their armed campaigns, enabling them to regroup and resurface after apparent military defeat. Unlike the illegal drugs trade, piracy and ransom activities, counterfeit operations and other types of wildlife crime, the unregulated and at times illegal charcoal trade represents a safe and convenient source of income that can be exploited by organized crime and non-State armed groups alike, far beyond their geographic areas of control. The mixing of the illegal and legal trade is symptomatic of many parts of the illegal wildlife trade and requires a particularly coordinated and complex response beyond that of environmental or enforcement agencies in isolation.

V. Responses

19. The illegal trade in wildlife is now widely recognized as a significant threat to the environment and sustainable development. This is reflected in a range of decisions adopted by CITES, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, INTERPOL and the Security Council, including on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

20. The most important and effective responses to addressing the illegal wildlife trade are those that cause a reduction in consumer demand. Although there have been some successes in demand reduction for illegally traded wildlife products, such responses require behavioural change outcomes, effected through greater awareness and understanding at the consumer end, including about how wildlife is laundered through legal supply chains. Indeed, effective responses in most cases where legal and illegal wildlife trade are mixed are likely to involve a range of measures, such as demand reduction though socioeconomic efforts, certification schemes and consumer awareness, more effective management, good governance and the availability of alternative livelihoods. These need to be coupled with enforcement, including frontline protection, effective customs activities, strengthened legislation, policing and judiciary efforts.

21. To date, enforcement measures to reduce the illegal wildlife trade have been modest. Investigative capacity has been inadequate, and funding for the protection of resources limited. The prosecution of illegal wildlife trade offences and sentencing for such offences often reflect petty crime or minor offences, and are often limited to low-level impoverished criminals at the lower end of the value chain. However, the illegal trade in wildlife often violates tax, anti-money-laundering and anti-corruption laws, and in some instances includes involvement in organized crime, violence, trafficking and funding of non-State armed groups. The consideration of the illegal trade in wildlife in relation to such laws may sometimes provide a far more effective, significant and appropriate entry point for investigation and subsequent evaluation for prosecution.

[12] See S/2013/413.
[13] Ibid.

VI. Successes and progress

22. There is a range of successful recent initiatives in addressing the illegal trade in wildlife developed by the international community as well as individual countries on various continents that can be expanded and built upon. Some significant examples are provided below, but these represent only a small portion of the many ongoing successful initiatives developed by the international community, non-governmental organizations and Governments.

23. Poaching for Shahtoosh wool caused a dramatic drop of some 80 to 90 per cent of the nearly 1 million Tibetan antelopes in China in the 1990s and 2000s. Responses to that poaching included working with local communities to establish reserves and other protected areas, combined with a significant police and military effort to prevent eradication. Improved management and successful awareness-raising campaigns combined with strict enforcement efforts prevented the Tibetan antelope's extinction. Populations of the antelope are slowly recovering, although they are still extremely vulnerable.

24. The deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon reached its lowest level in 2012 since monitoring of the forest began in 1988. Depending on the estimate, the deforestation was reduced by 64 to 76 per cent, primarily as a result of a coordinated enforcement approach using satellite imagery and targeted police operations and investigations. The effort included frontline protection and investigations, as well as prosecutions of ringleaders and networks. While enforcement efforts are likely to have been the primary cause of the observed reduction in illegal logging, it is significant that the campaign is being supported by large-scale efforts through reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD) and other initiatives to strengthen the participatory process for indigenous peoples and other stakeholders in order to develop sustainable alternative livelihoods. Combining civilian and State enforcement efforts remains an important challenge and priority in addressing the illegal wildlife trade more broadly.

25. Other important efforts at the supply end of the illegal wildlife trade include strengthening frontline protection, such as the recently initiated and ongoing large-scale training of wildlife rangers in East Africa. In the United Republic of Tanzania in particular, over 1,100 rangers have received specialized training in the past two years. The training course covers the tracking of poachers, tactics and wildlife crime scene management and has resulted in suspects being linked to crime scenes and a series of frontline arrests. The training course is not only improving the rangers' ability to stop and arrest poachers, but also supporting successful prosecutions and good enforcement ethics based on evidence, prosecution and trial in court. Such efforts invest in long-term capacity and do not merely provide short-term enforcement operations. Effective responses to the illegal trade in wildlife should include short-term and long-term good governance and enforcement efforts as well as activities to reduce the incentives of poaching and illegal logging, supported by appropriate legislation as a deterrent, and the development of alternative livelihoods. One-dimensional approaches, whether focused on enforcement or socioeconomic aspects, are unlikely to succeed in isolation.

26. In many areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America, there are still very few rangers on the ground and they often receive very low salaries. Transportation is often lacking to cover thousands of square kilometres of protected areas and rangers are increasingly faced with armed poachers and even militias. Over 1,000 rangers are reported to have been killed in service in recent decades worldwide. In the Virungas in East and Central Africa – home to the world's last remaining mountain gorillas – more than 200 rangers have been killed because of their interference with the illegal charcoal business in the area. Salaries, training and strengthening the presence of frontline rangers all require continuous and focused development support, which in many instances also strengthens the foundations of sustainable wildlife-based tourism. While rapidly deployed implementation of advanced technologies, such as cameras, sensors or aerial unmanned drones, is likely to support such efforts, such technologies are no substitute for well-trained and well-paid rangers, police and customs officers, investigators and judicial collaboration, along with community programmes and available alternative livelihoods.

27. At national borders, the joint United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World WCO container control programme has been successful in targeting sea and dry port container shipments in an increasing number of countries, resulting in seizures of illegally traded wildlife, including timber. On 23 and 29 January 2014 for example, two containers holding 3.8 tons of ivory and 266 teak logs were seized in Lomé, leading to multiple arrests.

28. International collaboration, such as that supported by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime, which includes CITES, UNODC, INTERPOL, the World Bank and WCO, together with increased collaboration among agencies and countries, has created a more effective structure to provide support to countries in the fields of policing, customs, prosecution and the judiciary. Improved sharing of intelligence among agencies has also enabled INTERPOL to support

countries in larger and more effective police operations, leading to larger seizures of illegal timber and wildlife products. In 2013, under Project Leaf of INTERPOL, "Operation Lead" was conducted in Costa Rica and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, resulting in the seizure of 292,000 cubic metres of wood and wood products – equivalent to 19,500 truckloads and worth around $40 million. Also in 2013, the INTERPOL Project Wisdom and Project Leaf in eastern Africa, which involved wildlife enforcement officers, forest authorities, park rangers, police and customs officers from five countries – Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe – resulted in the recovery of 240 kg of ivory and 856 timber logs, and 660 arrests. Also seized were 20 kg of rhinoceros horn, 302 bags of charcoal, 637 firearms and 44 vehicles.

29. With regard to money-laundering and organized crime, following a UNODC training course conducted in collaboration with the Financial Investigative Unit (FIU) of Indonesia and the Indonesian anti-corruption agency, trainers – from the national level in Jakarta to the local level in West Papua province – revealed how anti-money-laundering and anti-corruption regimes can be used to detect, investigate and prosecute illegal logging. After the course, FIU detected highly suspicious transactions, which in turn led to an investigation and prosecution whereby an earlier conviction for illegal logging that had resulted in a two-year prison sentence was overturned and the suspect was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment after being found guilty of money-laundering offences by the High Court of Jayapura, Papua province, on 2 May 2014. That case showed the scale of illegal logging and smuggling.

30. A number of initiatives involving collaboration between UNODC, WCO, CITES, INTERPOL, UNEP and other United Nations entities provide the opportunity for sharing and exchanging vital information, providing support and training to countries affected by the illegal trade in wildlife. These initiatives have yielded important and significant early results. However, the scale and coordination of their activities have been insufficient to keep pace with the growing illegal trade in wildlife. In addition, such enforcement efforts need to be matched with greater emphasis on consumer awareness and demand reduction (building on the growing number of consumer awareness-raising campaigns being initiated by civil society and other stakeholders at the national and international levels), the availability of sustainable alternative livelihoods, and efforts to address corruption.

VII. Conclusions and further considerations

31. Building on existing commitments, the following issues are suggested as priority considerations to further strengthen the ongoing response to the illegal trade in wildlife:

(a) The consequences of the illegal trade in wildlife span environmental, societal (including security) and economic impacts, including affecting the resource base for local communities, and resulting in the theft of natural capital at the national level. The illegal trade in wildlife is therefore a barrier to sustainable development, involving the use of a complex combination of weak environmental governance, unregulated trade, loopholes in legislation and laundering systems to conduct serious transnational crime, undermining government institutions and legitimate business;

(b) The illegal trade in wildlife involves a wide range of flora and fauna, across all continents. The pace, level of sophistication, and globalized nature of the illegal trade in wildlife is beyond the capacity of many countries and individual organizations to address. The illegal trade in wildlife not only constitutes a very significant criminal sector, involving organized crime, violent conflict and terrorism, but it also produces poverty, development and governance challenges. Of particular relevance is the increasing involvement of transnational organized criminal networks in the illegal trade in wildlife, as well as the significant impact on the environment and sustainable development. Current trends suggest that priority attention should be focused on the illegal trade in charcoal and other forest products, including timber and pulp, and the illegal trade derived from various charismatic mammals, especially elephants and rhinoceros;

(c) Responses to the illegal trade in wildlife need to reflect the differentiated and shared characteristics of various supply chains, and recognize that consumer demand remains the most important driver of such trade. The economic, social and environmental impacts of the trade can only be tackled effectively if both the demand and supply elements of the supply chain are targeted, using a combination of elements of deterrence, transparency, legal clarity and enforcement, behavioral change and the development of alternative livelihoods. This will require the engagement of both national and international stakeholders, including from the environmental, enforcement and development sectors and those involved in security and peacekeeping missions;

(d) At the national and regional levels, numerous strong recent commitments have been made in relation to the many aspects of the illegal trade in wildlife. Immediate, decisive and collective action is now required to narrow the gap between these existing commitments, including those made

under the various multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations entities, and their implementation. In particular, strengthened environmental legislation, compliance and awareness, and support to enforcement agencies are required to reduce the role of the illegal wildlife trade (especially in charcoal) in threat finance for the benefit of non-State armed groups and terrorism;

(e) Strengthened enforcement efforts need to be complemented by broader development and awareness-raising efforts. End-user markets need to be further analysed, and consumer awareness-raising campaigns need to be designed, supported and implemented systematically. Civil society and the private sector have a central role to play in such efforts, and also, in some instances, in identifying alternatives to satisfy consumer demand for illegally traded wildlife products;

(f) At the international level, a comprehensive and coordinated United Nations system-wide response to support holistic national approaches in addressing the illegal trade in wildlife is an important component of the global response. Such a response, with additional support from the enforcement sector, would further strengthen coordinated efforts in relation to coherent legislation, environmental law, poverty alleviation and development support, awareness-raising and demand reduction;

(g) Support from the international and bilateral donor community will be essential in recognizing and addressing the illegal trade in wildlife as a serious threat to sustainable development, and supporting national, regional and global efforts for the effective implementation of, compliance with, and enforcement of targeted measures to curb the illegal wildlife trade. In particular, investment is urgently required in demand reduction campaigns, and capacity-building of and technological support to national law enforcement agencies to enable them to further protect key populations of species threatened by illegal trade. Such support must be accompanied by renewed efforts to strengthen broader environmental management for sustainable development.